PERIOD 3: REGIONAL AND INTERREGIONAL INTERACTIONS, 600 – 1450

# The Increasing Influence of Medieval Europe

1. *The Regional States of Medieval Europe* – The remaining Roman Empire (Byzantium) began a long decline around 1100 C.E., eventually falling to the Muslim Turkish invaders in 1453. It had influenced the emergence of new states in Russia and Eastern Europe. In the late tenth century, however, German princes formed a so-called Holy Roman Empire, which they viewed as a Christian revival of the earlier Roman empire. In Spain, England, and France, rival monarchies developed.
	1. *The Late Byzantine Empire* – The Byzatine Empire faced major economic problems as well as threats from invaders:
		1. *Theme System* – As wealthy aristocrats amassed more and more land, the free peasant class slowly became dependent, leading to diminished tax receipts for the central government.
		2. *Challenges from the West* – During the early 11th century, Normans (descendants of the Vikings from northern France) and other Western Europeans mounted campaigns to recapture Jerusalem. Venetian merchants hijacked the fourth Crusade (1202-1204 C.E.) from its original mission to target Constantinople instead. They sacked the city, and it was not recaptured by the Byzantines until 1261.
		3. *Challenges from the East –* Nomadic Turks invaded Byzantium from the east, among whom the Muslim Seljuks were the most vicious. They attacked the agricultural

heartland of Byzantium: Anatolia. In 1453, the Byzantine Empire came to an end with the invasion of Ottoman Turks who conquered Constantinople with the help of new gunpowder technologies.

* 1. The Holy Roman Empire
		1. *Otto I of Saxony* – With the fall of the Carolingian Empire, regional counts, dukes, and local authorities governed their own territories. Otto of Saxony was an aggressive King who eventually extended his control past the Elbe River in lands populated by Slavic peoples. Pope John XII proclaimed Otto emperor in 962 C.E., giving rise to the Holy Roman Empire proper.
		2. *Investiture Contests* – Imperial authorities sought to name important church officials to their positions, and Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085) ordered an end to the practice of lay investiture. Emperor Henry IV (1056-1106) challenged the pope’s policy, and was excommunicated! Henry was forced to stand barefoot in the snow and beg for

the Pope’s forgiveness.

* + 1. *Frederick Barbarossa* – Frederick I was also known as Barbarossa (the “red beard”) who reigned from 1152 until 1190. He attempted to integrate Lombardy in northern Italy with his German holdings. The popes marshaled support from other European states, forestalling Barbarossa’s plans. The Holy Roman Empire was a regional state ruling Germany, though it failed to restore imperial unity to western Europe.
	1. Regional Monarchies in France & England – Princes established regional monarchies on the basis of relationships between lords and their retainers in france and England.
		1. *Capetian France* – After the last of the Carolingians died in 987 C.E., the lords elected a minor noble named Hugh Capet to serve as king in a small region around Paris. The Capetian kings added to their resources and by the early fourteenth century had centralized power and authority in France.
		2. *Norman England* – In 1066, William Duke of Normandy invaded England (with the help of the Pope’s knights), which was at the time ruled by descendants of the Angles and the Saxons. After winning and becoming William the Conqueror, he introduced Norman principles of government and land tenure to England. Both the Normans and the Capetians had successfully maintained order and reasonably good government in France and England.
	2. Regional States in Italy and Iberia
		1. *Church Influence in Italy* – A series of ecclesiastical city-states and principalities competed for power in Italy, while the popes ruled a territory known as the Papal State.
		2. *Italian states* – By the 1100s, Florence, Bologna, Genoa, Milan, and Venice dominated Italy.
1. Economic Growth
	1. *Growth of the Agricultural Economy* – Local lords pacified their territories and eased invasions, after which serfs and monks cleared forests and drained swamps and increased agricultural lands. This process quickly gained momentum.
	2. *Improved Agricultural Techniques –* Crop rotations and new crops such as beans helped promote better productivity. Beans enrich the land because they fix nitrogen in the soils where they grow. Meat, dairy, fish, vegetables, and legumes became more prominent in the high middle

ages. In Spain, Italy, and other Mediterranean lands, hard durum wheat, rice, spinach, artichokes, eggplant, lemons, limes, oranges, and melons became prominent.

* 1. *New Tools and Technologies* – European peoples expanded their use of water mills and heavy plows, which had appeared during the early middle ages. The horseshoe and the horse collar made it possible to increase sharply the amount of land that cultivators could work. This

fueled population growth. Where in 800 C.E., Europe’s population stood at 29 million, whereas by 1000, it had grown to 36 million. By 1200, the population had grown to 58 million people, and by 1300, to 79 million.

* 1. *Revival of Towns and Trade –* a growing urban population allowed for artisans, crafts workers, merchants, and a professional class to flourish. New towns at strategic sites became major cities and centers of commerce. The towns and cities resulted in the expansion of wool textile production in particular.
	2. *Mediterranean Trade –* In Italy, urban society exploded through the trade networks of the Mediterranean basin. During the tenth century, the cities of Amalfi and Venice began to serve as ports for merchants engaged in trade with Byzantine and Muslim partners. Italian merchants traded salt, olive oil, wine, wool fabrics, leather products, and glass for luxury goods such as gems, spices, silk, and other goods from India, southeast Asia, and china brought to the markets by Muslims.
	3. *Improved Business Techniques* – Rapidly increasing volume of trade encouraged the rise of credit, banking, and new business organizations. Bankers issued letters of credit to merchants, thus freeing merchants from the risk and inconvenience. New methods of pooling risk emerged, such as partnerships.
	4. *Guilds –* Merchants and workers in all the arts, crafts, and trades organized into guilds that controlled much of the urban economy of medieval Europe. They established standards of quality, requiring that their members adopt certain methods of production, and determined the prices at which products had to be sold.
1. Social Change in Europe
	1. *The Three Estates –* Medieval social commentators referred to “those who pray, fight, and work.” They refer to the clergy of the Roman Catholic church that owe their allegiance to the church rather than secular rulers; fighters from the ranks of nobles; and the peasants who cultivated land and depended on their lords for protection.
	2. *Chivalry –* Within the ranks of nobles, courtly behavior introduced expectations of high ethical standards and refined manners by which warriors became cultivated leaders of society.
2. European Christianity during the High Middle Ages – Most matters of politics and moral standards; rituals of birth, marriage, and death; and even art, literature, and music of the high middle ages were funded by and driven by the Church.
	1. *Cathedral Schools –* During the high middle ages, economic development increased the wealth of Europe, making more resources available for education. Educated people could deal with political, legal, and theological problems. Cathedral schools taught Latin, literature, and philosophy. Students read the bible and the writings of church fathers.
	2. *Universities –* Cathedral schools were transformed into universities by Faculty guilds that sought the right to bestow academic degrees, which were licenses to teach in other cities and to control the curriculum of those institutions. The first universities were born in Bologna, Paris, and Salerno – noted for instruction in law, theology, and medicine respectively – but soon universities arose in Rome, Naples, Seville, Salamanca, Oxford, Cambridge, and other cities throughout Europe.
	3. *Rediscovery of Aristotle* – Byzantine scholars knew Aristotle in the original Greek, and as commerce and communication between Byzantines and Romans increased, the ideas of Aristotle spread to Western Europe. Western scholars had learned about Aristotle from the Muslim philosophers who had translated most of his works into Arabic.
	4. *Scholasticism: St. Thomas Aquinas –* Scholastic theology sought to synthesize the beliefs and values of Christianity with the logical rigor of Greek philosophy. The most famous scholastic theologian was St. Thomas Aquinas. Belief in the existence of God did not depend exclusively on an individual’s faith, but it was rationally possible to prove that God exists. Aristotle had identified a conscious agent that had set the world in motion, and Thomas

Aquinas borrowed Aristotle’s reasoning to explain the Christian God.

* 1. *Monasticism –* Some Christians were worried that as wealth increased, European society was becoming excessively materialistic. People like St. Benedict founded monasteries, in which monks observed rituals of poverty, chastity, and obedience. St. Dominic and St. Francis were two friars who would have no personal possessions and begged for food from those to whom they preached.